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## SARAWAK NATIONAL PARK | Biodiversity Conservation

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Close to the Equator, and with a high rainfall year-round, Sarawak has an ideal climate for flora and fauna to flourish. Thus, it has amongst the highest per unit area in the world. Sarawak has about 185 species of mammals (*Payne et al, 1985*), 530 species of birds (*Mackinnon and Phillips, 1983*), 166 species of snakes, 104 of lizards and 113 of amphibians (*Anon, 1985*).

A large proportion of Sarawak's animals are unique to Borneo and do not occur in mainland South-east Asia. These include approximately 19% of the mammals, 6% of the birds, 20% of the snakes and 32% of the lizards; and these species are largely found in Totally Protected Areas. The vascular flora of Sarawak comprises more than 8,000 species. Over 2,000 tree species have been enumerated whereas orchid would number more than 1000 species, ferns account for 757 species and palm make up another 260 species.

It is an undeniable fact that much of Sarawak's endangered species is under threat of disappearing forever to extinction and this degeneration must be redressed. To conserve all species and habitats in perpetuity, Sarawak has adopted the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) recommended action that at least 10 per cent of its land area should be in totally protected areas.

In 1996, the Sarawak Government commissioned a Master Plan for Wildlife, which comprised a strategy to balance wildlife conservation with development in the State. Following its recommendations, the Government passed a new law, the Wild Life Protection Ordinance 1998, which banned all commercial sales of wildlife and wildlife products taken from the wild. It recognised that rural communities depend on wild meat and thus did not ban hunting. The new law was strictly enforced in urban areas followed by a widespread publicity and education campaign. Under this Ordinance, some of Sarawaks' wildlife which are endangered or rare are categorised as Totally Protected and Protected Animals. Sarawak has also implemented the total ban or trade of wildlife.